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FM AMEMBASSY DILI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4208  
INFO AMEMBASSY DILI

UNCLAS DILI 000025

DS/OSAC, DS/IP/EAP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AMGT APER ASEC TT

SUBJECT: ANNUAL OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (OSAC) CRIME AND SAFETY REPORT FOR DILI, TIMOR LESTE

REF: 08 STATE 199547

## II. Overall crime and safety situation:

The overall crime in Dili remains high, however the overall security situation has stabilized dramatically since the political crisis and civil unrest of 2006. After the February 11th, 2008 Coup attempt by the militant leader Reinado, the Government of Timor-Leste declared a State Of Emergency. Since the curfew was lifted in May 2008, there have been no reports of large scale unrest in Dili or anywhere else in the country. However, the U.S. Embassy continues to urge American citizens and their dependents to remain vigilant and use caution when traveling in Timor Leste.

The UN Police Mission (UNPOL), which had executive police authority following the 2006 crisis, plans to hand over full police authority to the National Police (PNTL) on a district-by-district basis. Plans for the handover are not final, but this will be a gradual process over the course of many months. During the handover, UNPOL will likely retain some role in maintaining security, although this has yet to be defined. The Australian Armed Forces (International Stabilization Force, ISF) have also helped secure Timor-Leste since the crisis. Its current strength is about 700 personnel. Unexploded ordinance devices dating from the pre-1999 independence struggle continue to be found in the districts. Those traveling should contact the local police to report each incident.

IA. Crime Threats - Westerners are often targeted for home robberies and all possible measures to deter break-ins is recommended. Vehicle thefts are rare, however leaving valuables in a locked car may result in the vehicle being broken into day or night. Often rocks are thrown at vehicles in the early to mid evening hours. Personal robberies are becoming more frequent, with many women reporting youths taking purses from behind with a getaway motorcycle close by.

Incidents of gang-related violence, arson, and vandalism in Dili have declined in recent months. However, gangs and martial arts groups remain pervasive in Timorese society and continue to present a latent threat to public safety.

IB. Safety; road conditions and road hazards - The overall safety and conditions of roads are hazardous in all parts of Timor. It is advised to have a SUV if possible. Local drivers, especially motorcyclists, are often reckless and are a menace to pedestrians, cyclists, and other drivers. Traveling on local transportation such as mini-buses or taxis is not recommended, especially after dark. In the outlying regions, many roads are often extremely dangerous with unmarked bends in the road and/or upcoming potential hazards. During the rainy season (November - April), roads can be washed away within minutes and not be repaired for months. Roadblocks are common, often with an illegal toll to pass by.

## II. Political violence:

There is very little threat of terrorism, but a high threat of political unrest at any given time in all of Timor.

**I.A. Historical perspective** - With the February 11, 2008 attacks against the President and Prime Minister, localized violence in August 2007 following Parliamentary Elections and the legacy of the 2006 crisis, the Government of Timor-Leste still relies on the ISF and UNPOL to assist its police and military in maintaining public security.

**I.B. Regional terrorism and organized crime** - Terrorist activities by Muslim extremist groups remain a problem in neighboring Indonesia. Timor-Leste's land border with Indonesia is relatively insecure, creating the potential for such groups to mount operations or seek refuge in Timor-Leste, although there has been no evidence of such developments to date. While there is organized crime in Timor, it is on the scale of petty racketeering and shake-downs and presents little or no threat to foreigners.

**I.C. International terrorism or transnational terrorism** - International terrorism is a threat throughout the world and being mindful that areas frequented by westerners are often targets for terrorists.

**I.D. Civil unrest** - Due to the security situation and the risk of violent civil unrest, practice good personal security and seek accommodations that have good security.

### III. Post specific concerns:

**I.A. Earthquakes and Floods** - Timor Leste is on an active seismic zone which enhances the chances for an earthquake. Flooding is common during the rainy season November to April.

**I.B. Industrial and Transportation Accidents** - Industrial N/A. Transportation accidents happen frequently with many locally owned vehicles unable to properly maintain normal maintenance. Local roads are not properly maintained to western standards.

**I.C. Kidnappings** - N/A

**I.D. Drugs and Narcoterrorism** - There is a small presence of drugs, but due to the low average income, most Timorese cannot afford drugs.

**IV. Police response:** The local police (PNTL) are ill equipped to handle most general and emergency situations without the aid of the UN Police. If you are a victim of a crime, arrested, or need assistance you should call the UN Police emergency number (670) 723 0365. Immediately contact the US Embassy Consular Officer 723-1616.

**V. Medical emergencies:** Please contact the UN Police (670) 723 0365

**I.A. Contact information for local hospitals and clinics** - Medical facilities are limited and evacuation may be required in cases of serious illness or accident. Generally, expatriates attend Dili National Hospital for treatment.

**I.B. Air ambulance services** - Air Ambulance service must be coordinated through the Embassy.

**VI. Travel Precautions:** Don't carry too much cash and remember that expensive watches, jewelry and cameras may be tempting targets for thieves. Precautions should be used in the prevention against luggage tampering, including theft, lock your luggage. Always protect your Passport by making a photocopy and keeping it separate from where you store your actual passport.

**VII. Further information: How to contact the Embassy.**

**I.A. Embassy contact numbers:** Regional Security Officer - 670 723 0948  
Embassy Operator, Medical Unit, Consular Affairs - 670 332 4684

**VIII. OSAC Country Council:** N/A